

LITURGY/SACRAMENTS – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: One Baptism
 Convener: Benjamin Durham, College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University
 Moderator: Kayla August, Boston College
 Presenters: Anne McGowan, Catholic Theological Union
 Christopher O'Brien, Catholic University of America
 Lauren Warner, Boston College

The selected papers for this topic session addressed the topic of One Baptism from three distinct methodological starting points, responding to the call for papers in ways representative of the diverse approaches that find their home in liturgical and sacramental theology.

Anne McGowan from Catholic Theological Union presented a paper titled "Baptized in One Church? Capacities and Challenges of Multi-Church Collaborative OCIA Processes." Employing an ethnographic approach, McGowan studied a number of Catholic churches located near one another who worked together to craft a shared experience of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). In McGowan's view, while some aspects of this collaborative approach had significant potential to be liturgically and pastorally beneficial (such as new members becoming familiar with more local church communities than just the specific one they join), a number of challenges complicated these benefits (such as new members remaining still relatively unknown to the church community they are joining, due to the OCIA process unfolding as relatively sequestered from other aspects of parish life).

Christopher O'Brien from the Catholic University of America presented a paper titled "Reintegrating Baptism and Eucharist: A Case for Communing Baptized Infants in Roman Catholicism." Combining liturgical-historical study, sacramental-theological argument, and narrative, O'Brien crafted a five-point case for complete Roman Catholic sacramental initiation of infants. First, O'Brien traced the history of initiatory practice in the Roman West. Second, he argued for the sacramental-theological coherence of unified initiatory rites, including for the very young. Third and fourth, O'Brien laid out the connection between the theological dictum that "the Eucharist makes the church," and young persons' desire for communion participation (and their understanding of what they are doing, "according to their capacity"). Finally, O'Brien noted that such a full initiatory practice for infants would be a step closer in ecumenism both to partners in the East and the West.

Lauren Warner from Boston College presented a paper titled "Harmonizing the Waters: Music as a Celebration of Baptism and Unity in Catholic Liturgy." Drawing extensively from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document *Coworkers in the Vineyard of the Lord* and liturgical-ministerial practice, Warner argued that music crafts a shared liturgical space where unity can coalesce in celebrating rites like baptism. Beyond simply being a catalyst for liturgical celebration or a non-essential add-on, the exercise of liturgical music is a proper ministry ordered toward ecclesial and liturgical unity. To make music together, as Warner presented it, is to play a part in making the church together.

The discussion which followed the paper presentations drew connections between the authors' work, such as a connection between children's participation in music and their participation in sacraments, and a connection between shared OCIA processes and initiatory rites for children and infants. Overall, the roughly twenty-eight persons gathered to engage the papers were quite appreciative in their questions and comments, and the presenters followed the flow of questions to more fully flesh out their arguments and the implications embedded in them. A consistent theme in the discussion was unity, especially as it finds facilitation in the experience of music (even musical traditions that may be unfamiliar to some or many in a congregation), challenge in the navigation of particular church characters and traditions when they collaborate liturgically, and some level of ambiguity when considering full sacramental participation of children and infants. Altogether, it was an edifying and illuminative session.

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